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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001324

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/30/2022

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [IZ](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: ANTI-PKK ENVOY AKGUNAY WANTS CONCRETE
STEPS IN NORTHERN IRAQ

REF: A. ANKARA 1281

[1](#)B. ANKARA 1260

[1](#)C. BAGHDAD 1757

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On May 29, Ambassador reviewed the state of play on anti-PKK efforts with Deputy Undersecretary Rafet Akgunay, who replaced retired General Edip Baser as Turkey's envoy for combating PKK terrorism following Baser's May 21 dismissal (ref b). Ambassador noted progress on U.S.-Turkey intel sharing and anti-PKK measures in Europe, while acknowledging Iraqi coolness to Turkey's proposed deliverables for a trilateral conference. He stressed the U.S. remains committed to working with Turkey and Iraq to end PKK violence from northern Iraq; that a trilateral approach can still succeed; and, that we must make progress in all aspects of the problem. General Ralston remains engaged and will come to the region if progress appears possible. Akgunay stated that help with PKK support in Europe is appreciated but concrete and visible steps against PKK terrorists in northern Iraq are essential to showing a skeptical public that progress is possible and to improving overall bilateral relations. Turkey demands that Iraq declare the PKK a terrorist organization, outlaw it, and close down camps close to the border. Closure of the Makhmour camp is of little interest to Turkey. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador congratulated Akgunay on his additional responsibilities. He said he is also not satisfied with progress to date in our common effort to curb PKK terrorism. We have good intelligence sharing mechanisms but we will look for ways to do better. We have also achieved some successes in convincing our European allies to clamp down on the PKK, focusing on their criminal activities. Our efforts in northern Iraq have had the least tangible results. Ambassador reported on Embassy Baghdad's recent meeting with Iraqi officials on Turkey's proposed deliverables for a trilateral meeting (ref c). He acknowledged lack of Iraqi enthusiasm for interdicting PKK logistics and camps, and the lack of response on declaring the PKK a terrorist organization. More conversations with the Iraqis will follow. General Ralston remains committed to the process, the Ambassador assured Akgunay; he has no immediate travel plans but this could change.

[1](#)3. (C) Expressing appreciation for the Ambassador's recap, Akgunay stated that Turkey expects major steps in northern Iraq. Progress in Europe or with U.S. - Turkey information

sharing is no substitute; it is not apparent to the public, but the funerals of dead soldiers are. Recent developments, including the accidental violation of Turkish airspace by U.S. warplanes on May 24 and press reports that Turkey turned over an al Qaeda suspect to the U.S., have not been helpful. Turkey is receiving mixed signals from the U.S. Visible steps against the PKK in northern Iraq are essential to our joint fight against terror as well as to improvement of bilateral relations, he stressed.

¶4. (C) Akgunay noted Turkey has seen no progress on its three core demands -- that the Iraqis declare the PKK a terrorist organization, outlaw it, and shut down camps close to the border. He termed closure of the Makhmour camp a "non-starter" which will not satisfy the Turkish public. He said Turkey places no faith in Barzani, whom they believe actively supports the PKK presence in Iraq.

¶5. (C) Ambassador assured Akgunay the U.S. remains committed to working with Turkey to curb PKK violence from northern Iraq, that General Ralston's efforts continue, and that we will push for simultaneous progress on all three aspects of the problem: bilateral information sharing, PKK support in Europe, and the PKK presence in northern Iraq.

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